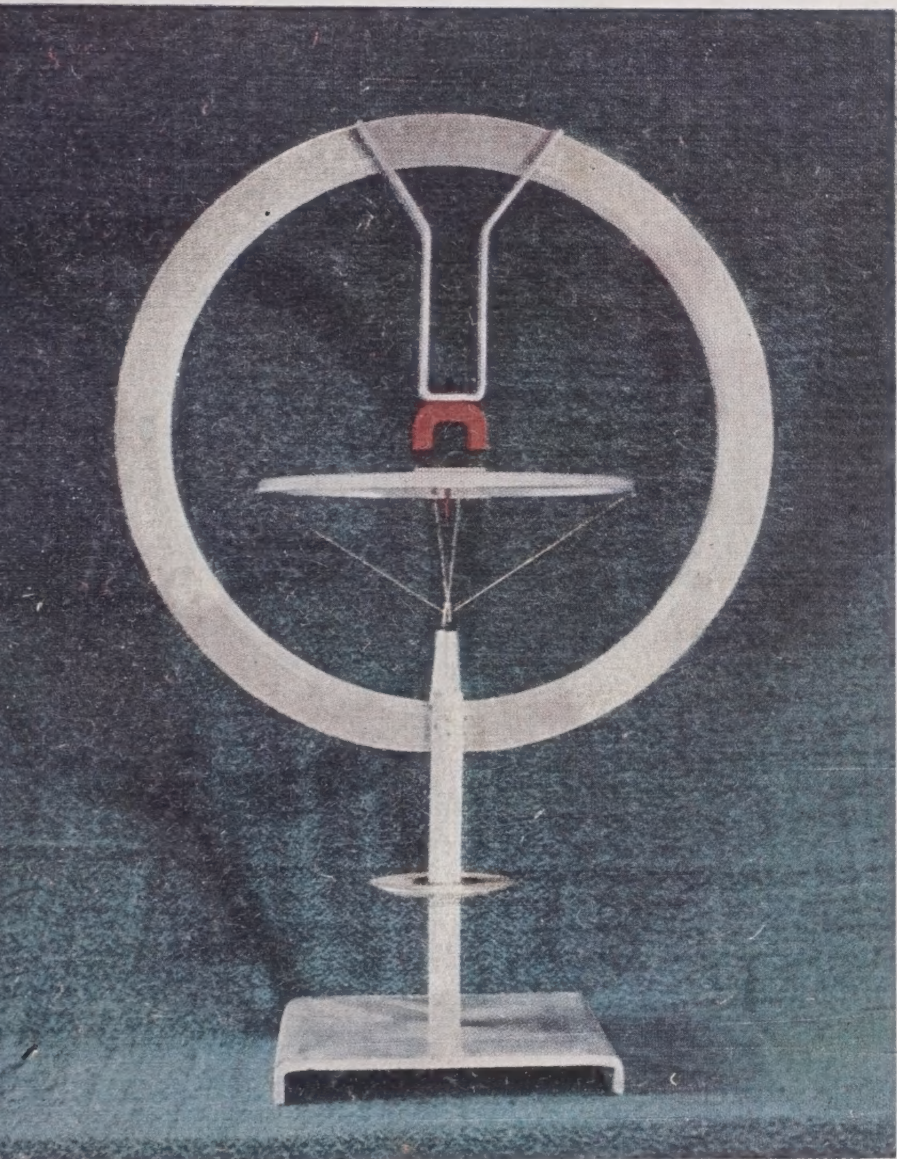


CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART SERIES



A. M. DAVIERWALLA

LALIT KALĀ AKADEMI

LALIT KALĀ SERIES  
ON  
CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

This series dealing with the work of modern Indian artists endeavours to bring to the public at low cost the art of our own times. Each pocket-book contains an introduction, reproductions in colour and black and white and a short biographical note.





**A. M. DAVIERWALLA**

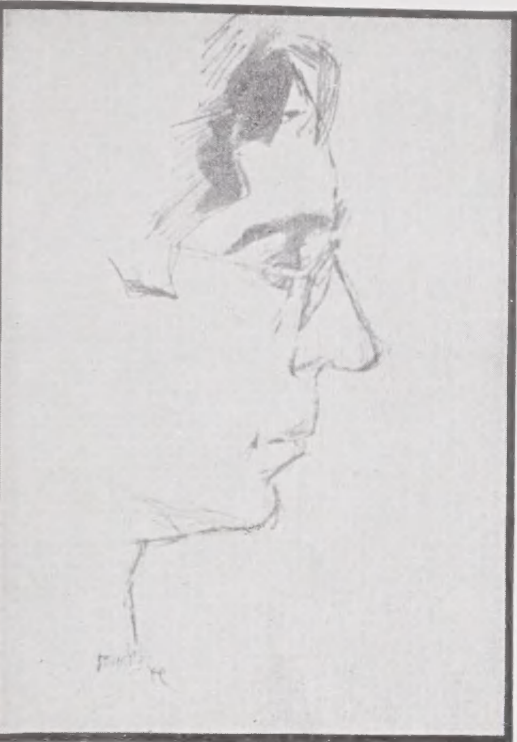
**LALIT KALĀ AKADEMI  
INDIA**



1971

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A. M. DAVIERWALLA

The name Adi Davierwalla does not conjure before the mind's eye a type product. The type product is in a sense an artist's signature—it describes the artist's major preoccupation, it is his familiar spirit, it asserts the wholeness of his personality that has weathered the schismatic strain of living. When the type product eludes us we think back on an artist's work over many years, and we may look into the reasons for this.

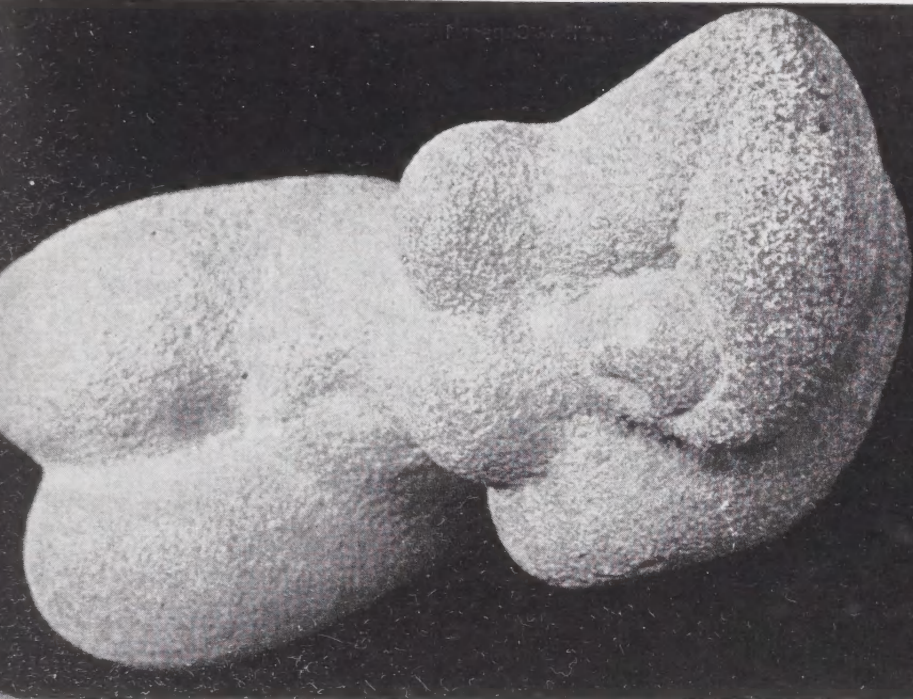
Davierwalla begins his work as a sculptor in a post-colonial society. Within the country he could have found no contemporary sculpture of importance or relevance. Outside the country, in the West, a great deal of material. If one wishes to plant an oasis in a desert one must first obtain saplings. Some of these will take in the new soil, others won't; but many varieties must be tried.

The only legitimate act of creation from a society that has suffered castration through colonial occupation must be, at least initially, an aggressive act. Our modern cities are barren tracts. It is not possible to produce sculpture in this vacuum. Some of Davierwalla's initial work, therefore, attempts to inhabit this vacuum by a retaliatory taking from the West. I believe it is a sign of Davierwalla's integrity that he makes no attempt to 'individualize' these pieces with the veneer of a unifying personality. This explains to me the fact that sculptors like Arp, Brancusi and Gonzales can exist in his oeuvre side by side, stark and unapologetic.

It is because of the courage implicit in this aggressive act that Davierwalla can soon after move on with confidence and produce work of his own that shares in the modern sensibility of his contemporaries the world over. In this connection I recall his cryptic remark regarding the rich tradition of Indian sculpture. "I have of course looked into it", he says : then with a rueful shake of the head—"but no". When asked to explain further, he says, "our traditional sculpture is complete in itself. We should leave it alone". At a time when every insignificant socialite and politician exhorts a banal synthesis this decision has the ring of clarity about it. It is the statement of a man who will act and put his product to the test.

Yet one more attitude has resulted in the richness and diversity we see in Davierwalla's work ; this is his abhorrence of the personality cult with which the artist tends to invest his work. If the artist no longer feels compelled to project a repetitive and confirmed image of himself, his production can expand into a number of directions. Other aspects of Davierwalla's oeuvre reflect this catholicity. He has shown preference for materials as different as wood, stone, marble, bronze, steel, plastic and aluminium. There seems to be no particular favourite material. Again, modelling, carving and assemblage have each been given equal and undivided attention at different times. All



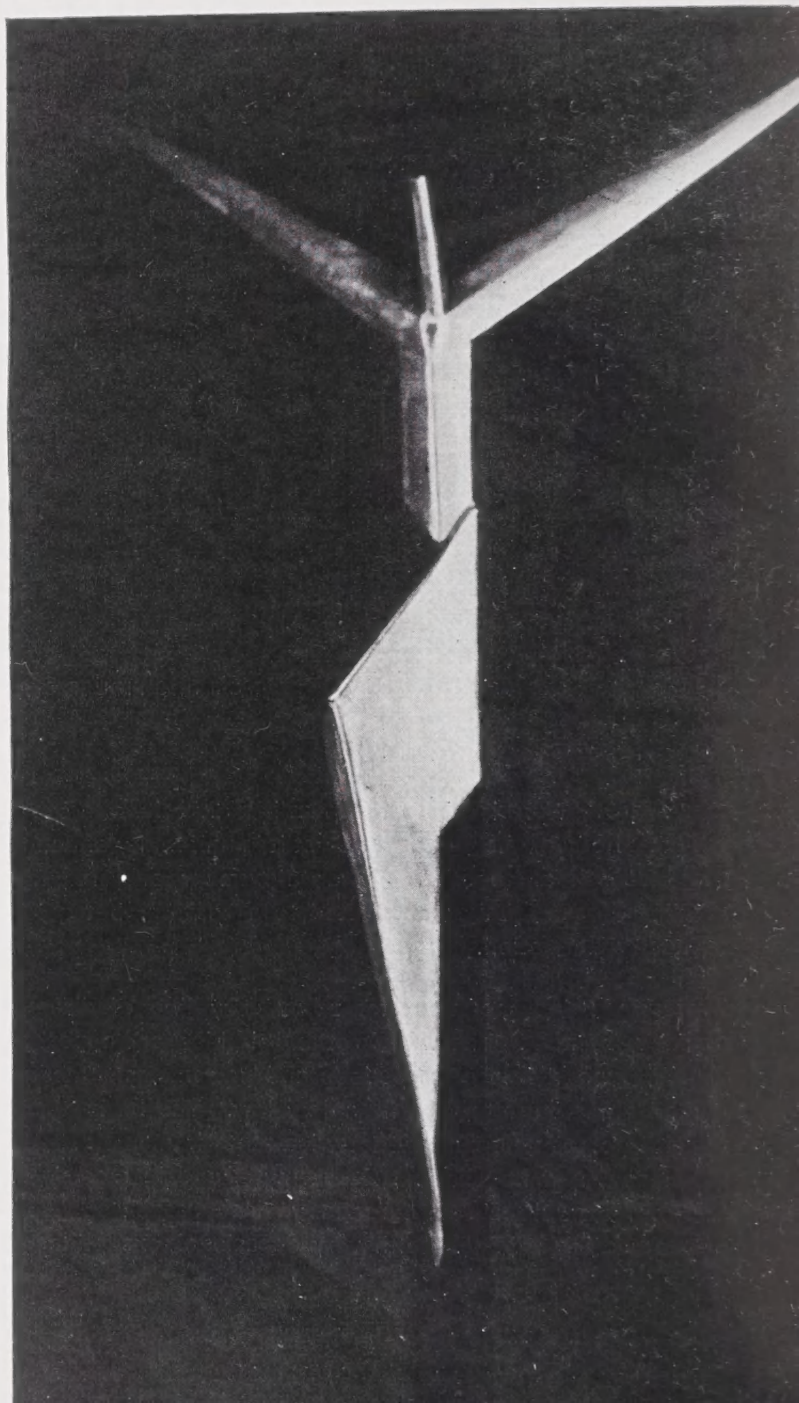


1. RECLINING FIGURE Grey Stone 1950

these factors contribute to the puzzling diversity one sees in the total body of the work. And yet it is uniformity of concern that holds it all together. Over a number of years these various elements have contributed to a baffling, but quite a unique orchestration.

Davierwalla does not trace for us an easy line of discovery and development. The various strands in his work appear and vanish, expand into clear periods and patterns, and at unexpected moments reappear in a low key. The basic themes remain constant only subject-wise—the human form, the crucifixion, and flagellation, Greek myth, and in recent years non-representational sculpture that yet is repeatedly suggestive of the earlier subjects. With very occasional exceptions the

2. CRUCIFIXION, Sheet Copper 1955



vertical and the horizontal axes form a basic anchor for the understanding of his work : the human form—standing, soaring suspended, or falling, floating and reclining.

Already within the first years he has presented to us his basic preoccupations ; the grey stone **RECLINING FIGURE** of 1950 (incidentally, one of the few pieces having a palpable relationship to Indian sculpture), the soaring **CRUCIFIXION** of 1955, the vertical **OEDIPUS** of 1956, and the floating **EMBRYO** of 1958. If one sees sculpture as a static art that shows a constant yearning towards movement, it is not difficult to understand that this movement, even in the monolithic piece, is a result of tension between two points ; between earth and the heavens in soaring figures, earth and gravity in standing figures, and between two latitudinal points in reclining figures. The floating form is more complex in that the tensions operate from more directions latitudinal, upward, and through a modified gravity.

These tensions undergo development and modification in the years to come ; the standing figures become two interlocked figures (the white wood piece, 1963), and the soaring reaches an interesting climax in **GENESIS** (1967) where the sculpture rests vertically on a pin point base, and the magnet attracts the 'sperm' piece upwards towards its fulfilment.

The tension between infinite points now becomes concentrated and limited to the earth. In **GALAXY** of 1966, two crescent forms face each other across a short bridge ; this play between two finite points is taken up again in **CONFRONTATION** 1969 and fully developed in the aluminium sculpture of 1969-70.

Between 1964 and 1966 Davierwalla worked with pieces of scrapwood that had weathered on the verandah of his house. He set himself the problem of using these unaltered, the 'found' shapes dictating the sculpture. He separated the

'geometric' pieces from the 'organic' pieces and used them separately. The two sets show a polarity between the ascetic and the sensual. The hard edged, geometric pieces of wood used in 'Mother and Child' 1964 give it a spare and angular appearance. In contrast, the softening and ageing process of weather on the 'organic' pieces was used to greatest advantage in 'Leda and the Swan' of 1965. Later he deliberately cut and modified pieces and produced a new set of sculpture in this genre—those in pine wood and perspex done in 1968 in the U.S.A. In the aluminium sculpture of a few years later these qualities work together in the same sculpture—the material itself, with its modest sheen being unsensual in the extreme, the geometric circularity of the forms contributing a sense of gentle softening.

The genre of assemblage also forces Davierwalla to work 'within' each sculpture to an extent greater than in his earlier pieces. Assemblage, by nature, cannot be monolithic. This 'inworking' allows the third dimension to present itself more aggressively, as in 'Pathfinder' 1965. I believe that in this group of sculpture he is taking up also an idea that appeared ten years ago and was then abandoned. In **JUDAS** and **FLAGELLATION** (both of 1955) a ridge of relief runs across the main block of the wood, creating a counter-point of line across the mass of the sculpture. In the scrap wood assemblies it is the **Edge** of each little piece that forms a broken line across the surface of the sculpture.

The aluminium sculpture of 1969-1970 is in a class by itself. In many ways it could be considered a meeting point for various aspects of Davierwalla's work that have till now found expression in scattered units. Most important, it offers a fusion between his talent and his temperament. By nature Davierwalla is an undemonstrative personality. There is a screen of precision and correctness, and it is only with acquaintance that



3. OEDIPUS, Pink Agra Sand Stone 1956

the warmth and richness of the personality begin to be revealed.

Aluminium is at first glance a retiring material. The detached geometric form of the sculpture would seem to re-enforce this aspect of the material. But it has a cool silveriness which is



hidden deep within, and the sculpture is strangely manipulated to expose this. It is interesting to note the use Paolozzi has made of this metal—his ideal machines bring out its technological suggestiveness. Davierwalla has evoked instead, a soft sheen that encourages contemplation.

It is not possible to predict what further use Davierwalla may make of this material, and of the dialectic that he has expressed through it. Each sculpture is treated as a piece of two parts, and sometimes there is a moving bridge in between, asserting the duality of the pieces.

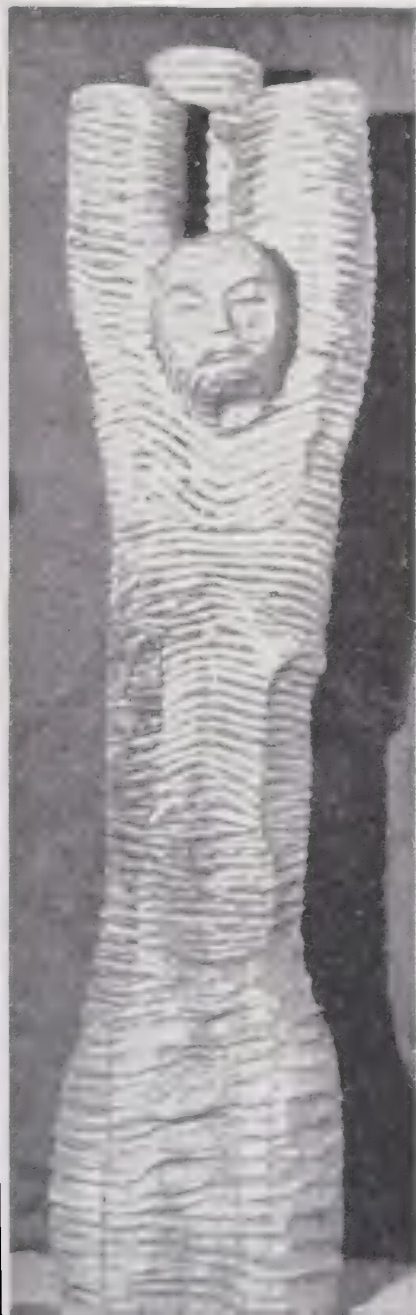
Some aspects of Davierwalla's work have as yet been incompletely explored, and it may be that these will preoccupy him in the future. I am thinking of sculpture like **FLEUR DU MAL** and **MANY HEADED HYDRA** of 1960-1961 where branch and petal like forms grow outwards organically from a single trunk. There is the aluminium **SUSPENDED ANIMATION**, where the magnet reappears, pulling a floating disc upwards into the orbit of a circle.

Even should Davierwalla stop working at this point, and we know he will not, he has rendered to modern Indian sculpture the service of two or three artists. It may be the poverty of contemporary sculpture in our country has led him into this diverse expression ; but there is no doubt that today he is the only sculptor here to have produced a body of work over the years that is consistent in authenticity and understanding.

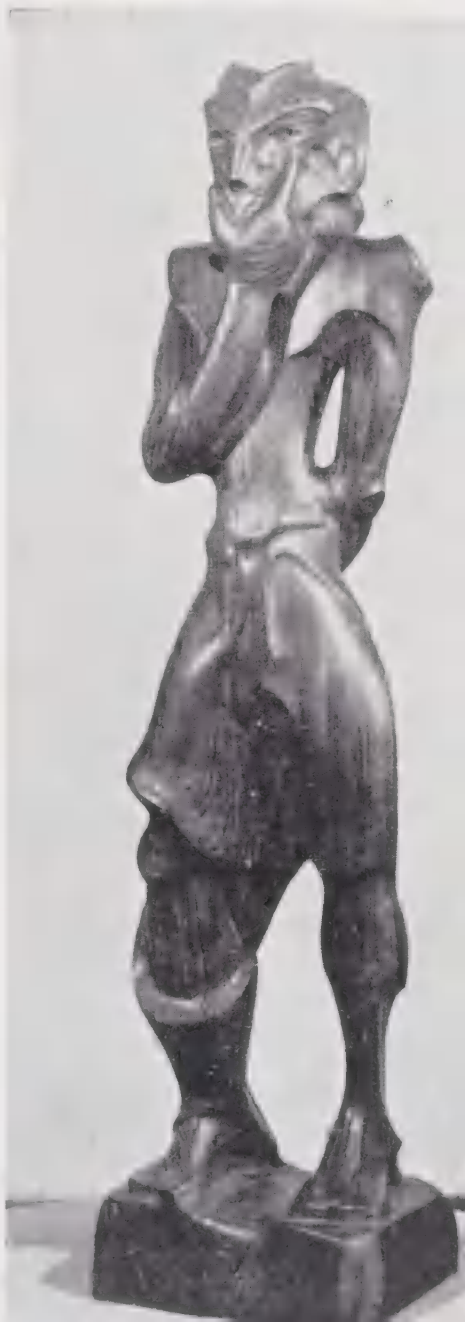
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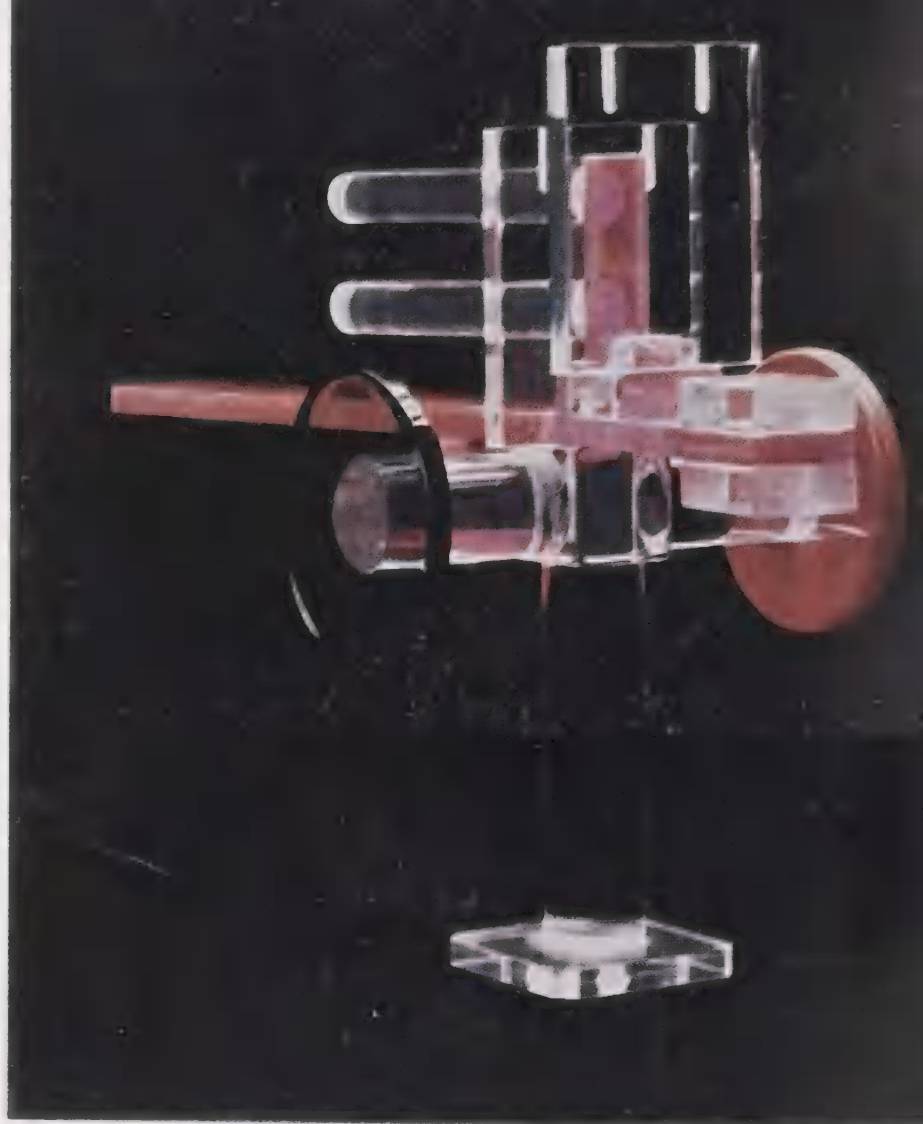
Gieve Patel

4. FLAGELLATION Teak 1955



5. JUDAS Teak 1955

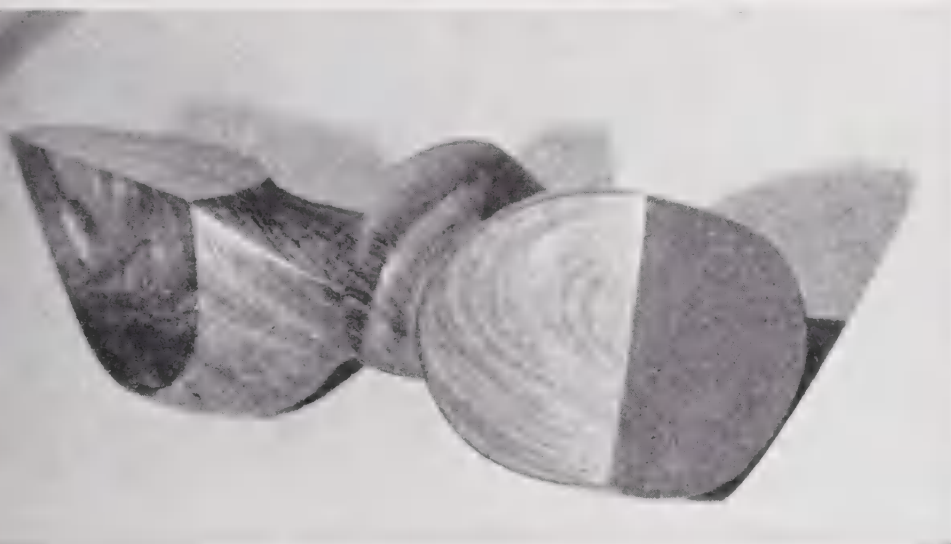




6. STUDY IN LIGHT AND COLOUR. Perspex 1968



7 RECLINING FORM, Rose Wood 1959





9 MISSILE Marble 1959



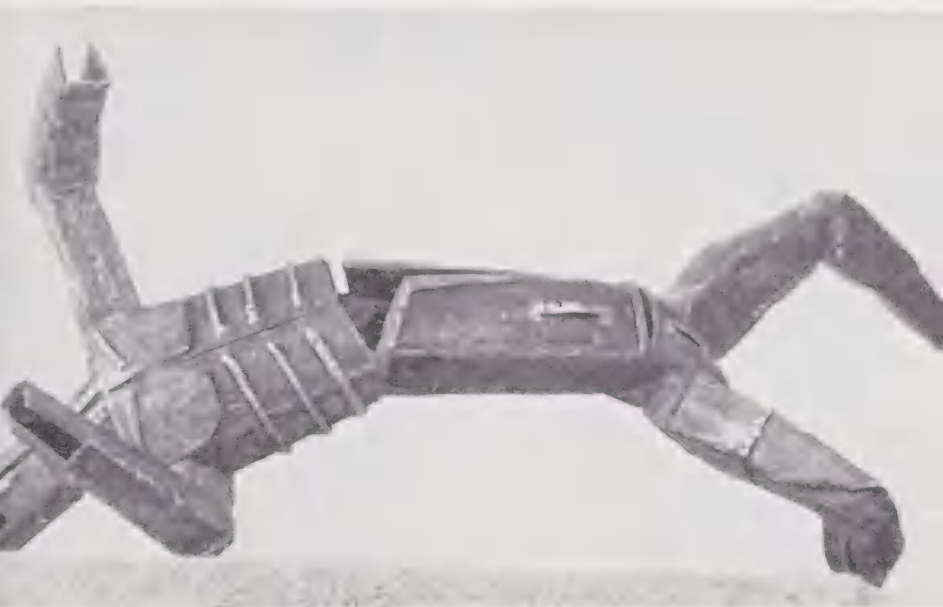
10. ABSTRACT STUDY Bronze 1960

11. SEATED FIGURE Malad Stone 1961



12. FLEUR DU MAL, Rose Wood 1962





13. FALLING FIGURE (Study), Welded Steel 1962

14. DRYAD, Sivern Wood 1960



15. FLOATING FIGURE, Sheet Bronze 1962





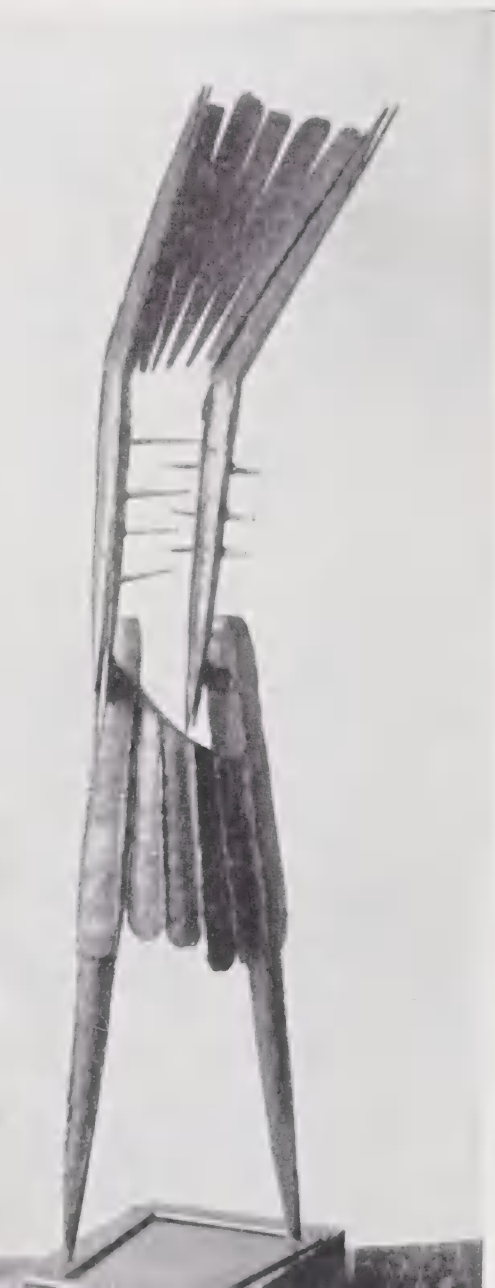




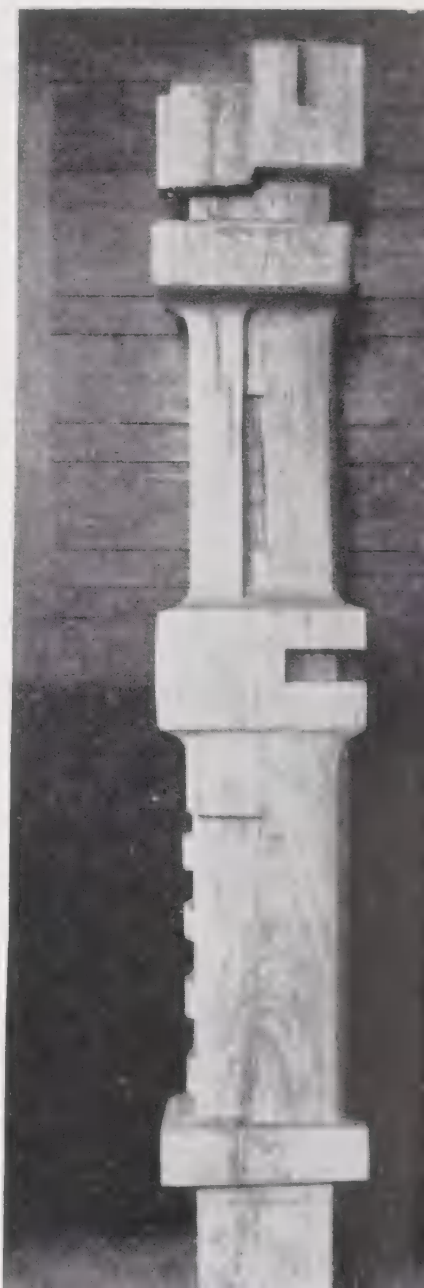


17. CIRCLE AND CROSS  
Aluminium 1970

18. ICARUS  
Welded Steel 1963



19. INTERLOCKED FIGURES  
Sivern Wood 1963



20. LITTLE GANDHARVA, Pink Agra Sand Stone 1963



21. MANY-HEADED HYDRA, Bronze 1962

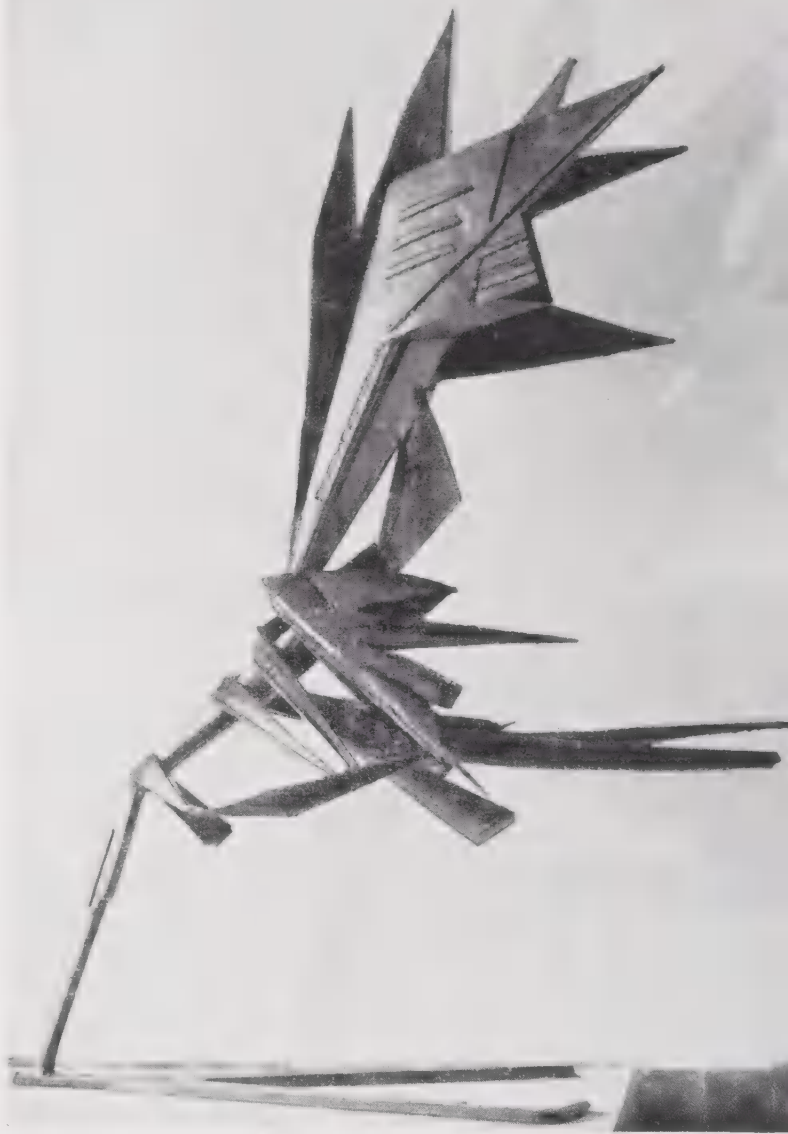




22. THUNDER BIRD  
Welded Steel 1964

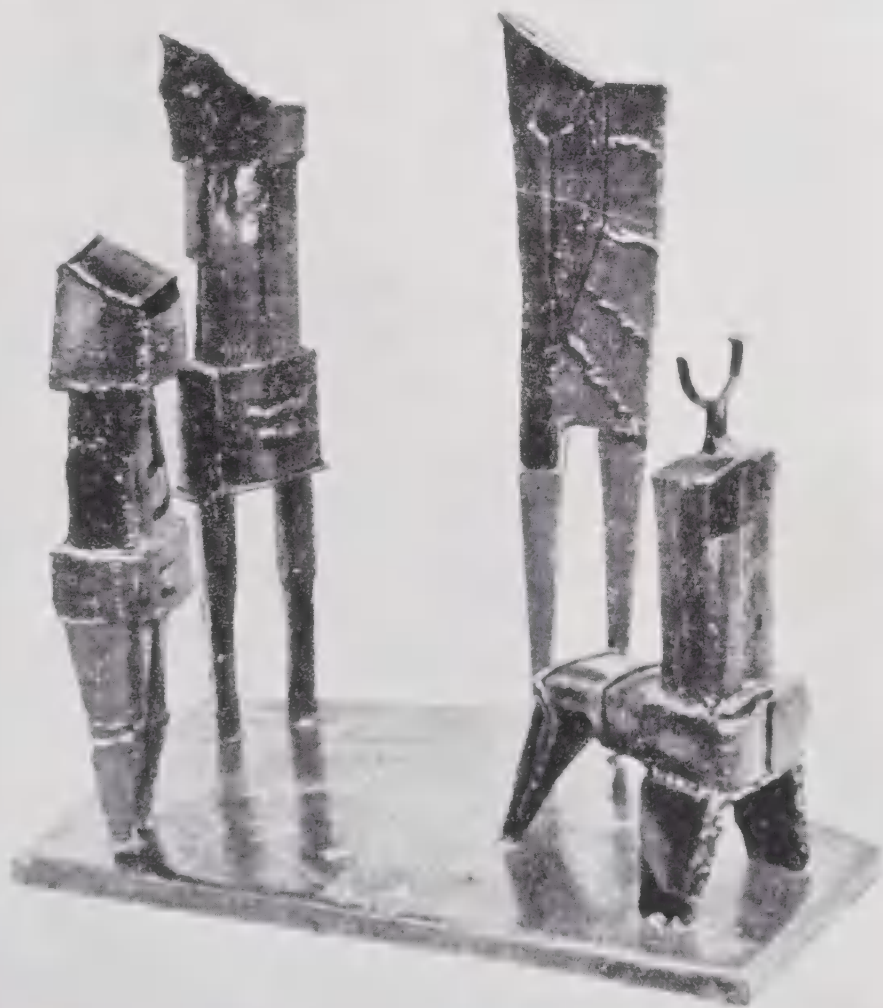


23. FLOATING FIGURE  
Relief in cast lead 1964



24. MEGHDOOT, Welded Steel 1964

25. SHE AND THREE OTHERS. Welded Steel 1964



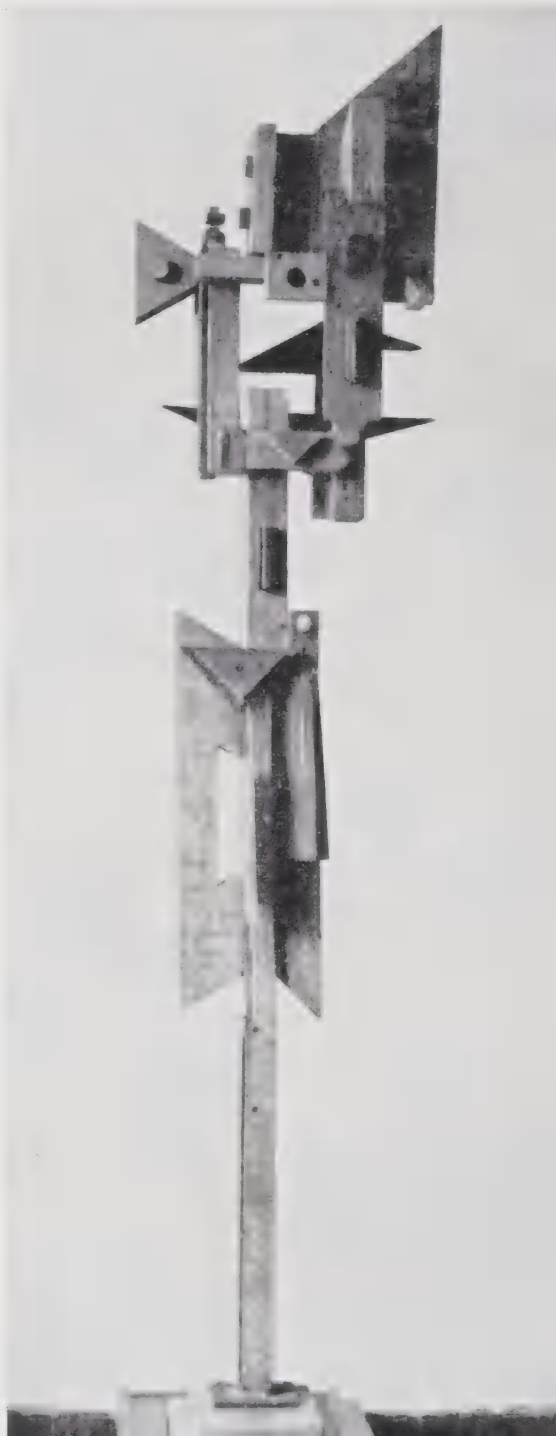


26. LINEAR ANALYSIS OF A STRIDING FIGURE, Aluminium 1970





28. MOTHER AND CHILD  
Scrap Wood 1964





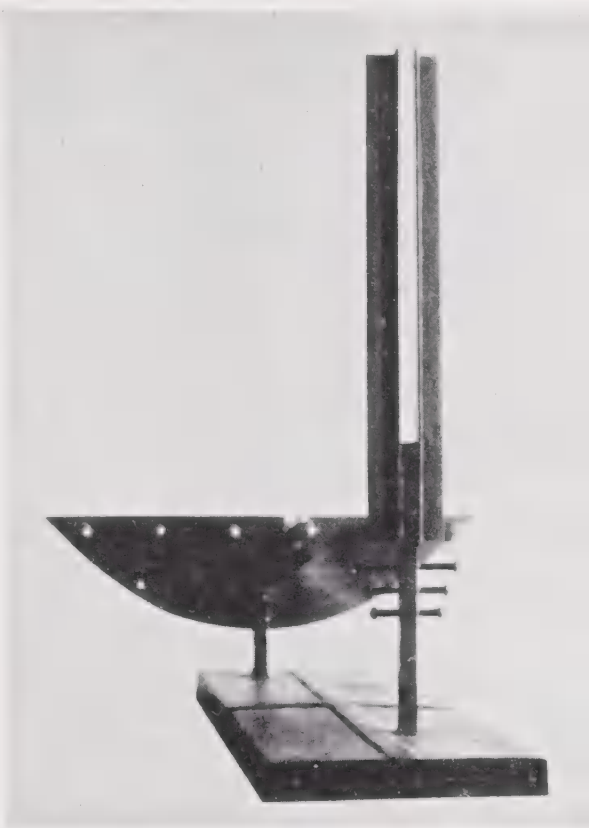
29. GALAXY, Welded Steel, Brass, Glass, etc 1966



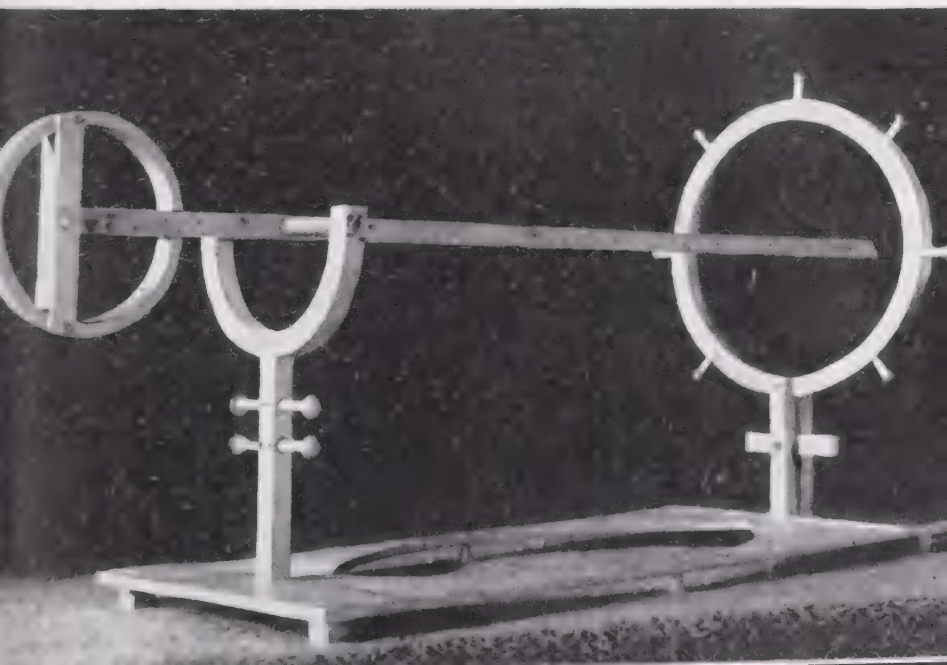
30. LEDA AND THE SWAN, Scrap Wood 1965

31. CONFRONTATION, Welded Steel 1

31. CONFRONTATION  
Welded Steel 1969



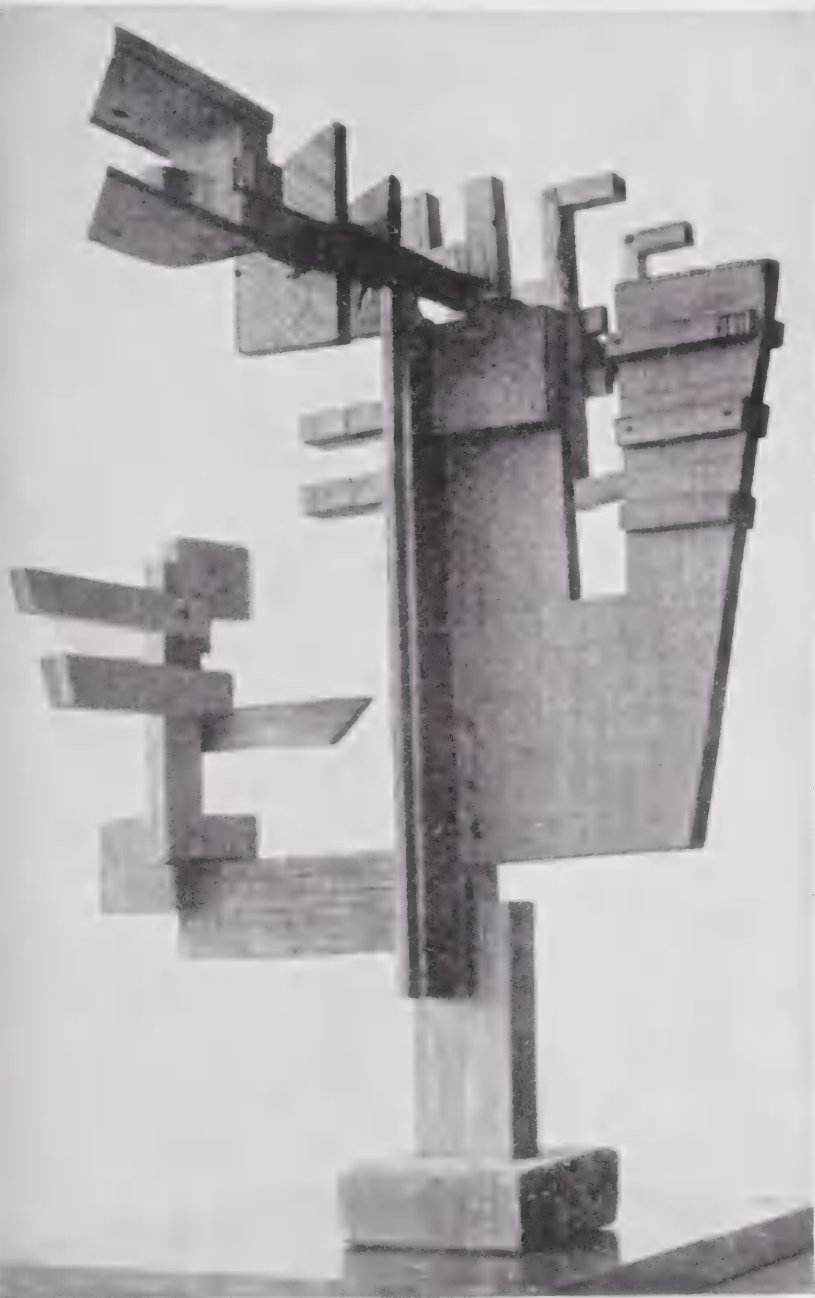
32 COSMIC BALANCE  
Aluminium 1969



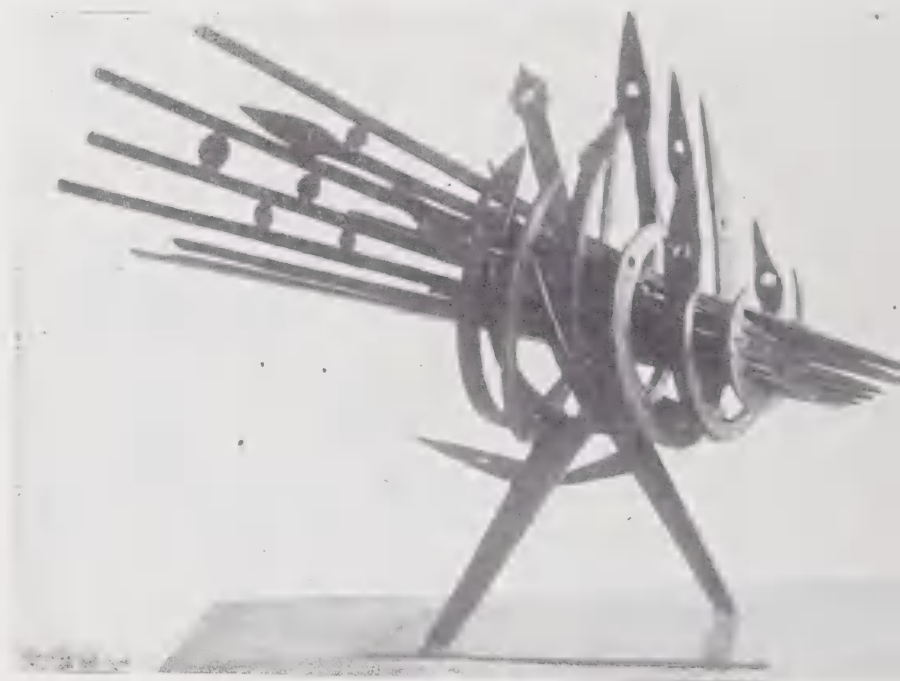


33. GENESIS

Welded Steel and Magnet 1967

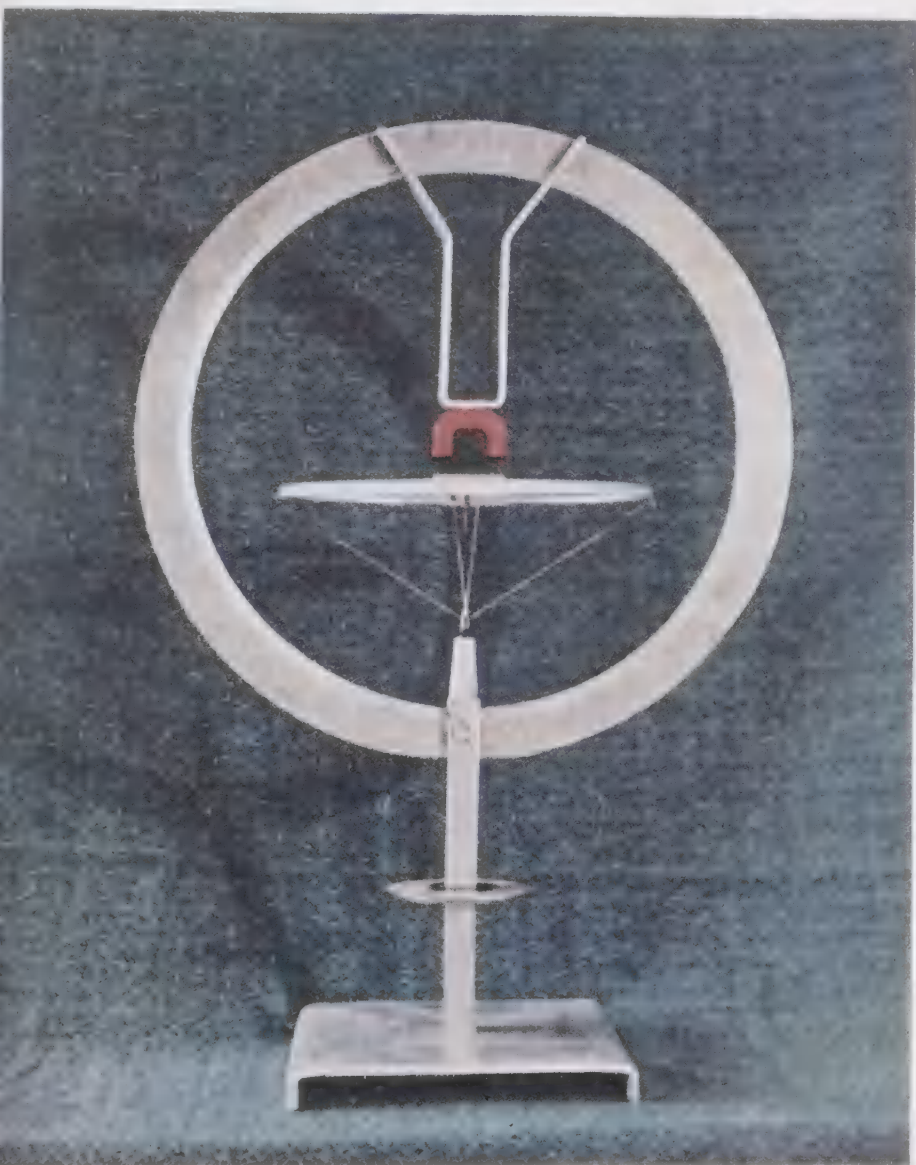


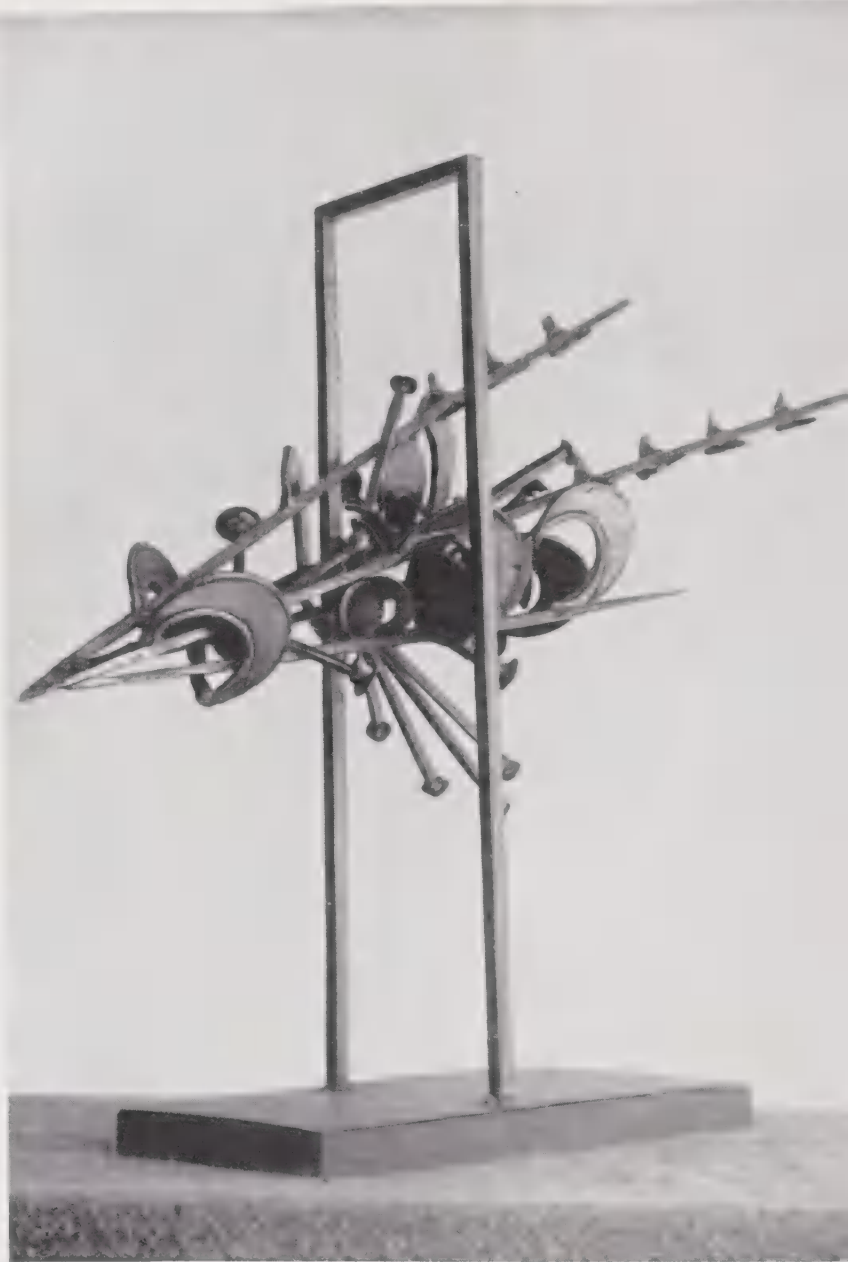
35. DEATH CAME SHRIEKING, Welded Steel 1969





36. ANIMATED SUSPENSION. Aluminium and Magnet





37. BREAKTHROUGH, Welded Steel 1969

# A. M. DAVIERWALLA

# LALIT KALA AKADEMI

No.	Title	Medium	Year	Size	Collection
1.	Reclining Figure	Grey Stone	1950	1'-8"	B. Alper, Boston U.S.A.
2.	Crucifixion	Sheet Copper	1955	1'-6"	P. Narielvala
3.	Oedipus	Pink Agra Sand Stone	1956	2'-6"	Tata Inst. of Fund. Research
4.	Flagellation	Teak	1955	3'-6"	E. Alkazi
5.	Judas	Teak	1955	3'-6"	Air India
6.	Study in Light and Colour	Perspex	1968	1'-4"	Bertha Schaefer Gallery, New York
7.	Reclining Form	Rose Wood	1959	1'-8"	Artist
8.	Embryo	Marble	1958	1'-8"	University of Punjab, Chandigarh
9.	Missile	Marble	1959	1'-8"	Brady & Co.
10.	Abstract Study	Bronze	1960	2'	Atomic Energy Establishment
11.	Seated Figure	Malad Stone	1961	2'-6"	Artist
12.	Fleur du Mal	Bronze	1962	1'-8"	Akbar Padamsee
13.	Falling figure (study) (Enlarged to 17 feet for Atomic Energy Establishment)	Welded Steel	1962	2'	P. Thacker
14.	Dryad	White Wood	1960	4'-6"	Late Dr. Homi Bhabha
15.	Floating Figure	Sheet Bronze	1962	1'-8"	Artist
16.	Crucifixion	Welded Steel	1962	2'-8"	N. Vakil
17.	Circle and Cross	Aluminium	1970	3'-6"	Artist
18.	Icarus	Welded Steel	1963	4'-6"	National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
19.	Interlocked Figures	White Wood	1963	6'-6"	Artist
20.	Little Gandharva	Pink Milling Stone	1963	2'	Van der Gagh
21.	Many Headed Hydra	Bronze	1962	1'-8"	D. Mistry
22.	Thunder Bird	Welded Steel	1964	4'	Tata Inst. of Fund. Research
23.	Floating Figure	Relief in cast lead	1964	1'-6"	Mrs. P. A. Wadia
24.	Meghdoot	Welded Steel	1964	6'-6"	Larsen & Toubro
25.	She and Three Others	Welded Steel	1964	1'-8"	Lalit Kala Akademi
26.	Linear Analysis of a Striding Figure	Aluminium	1970	1'-6"	Artist
27.	Surya Dev	Welded Steel	1967	12'	Ananta Coop. Housing Society
28.	Mother and Child	Scrap Wood	1964	5'-6"	Artist
29.	Galaxy	Welded Steel, Brass Glass, etc.	1966		Bal Chabda
30.	Leda and the Swan	Scrap Wood	1965	6'-6"	Artist
31.	Confrontation	Welded Steel	1969	2'	Artist
32.	Cosmic Balance	Aluminium	1969	2'	Artist
33.	Genesis	Welded Steel and Magnet	1967	4'-6"	S. Nanavati
34.	Pathfinder	Scrap Wood (Later cast in Aluminium)	1965	2'	N. Vakil
35.	Death came Shrieking	Welded Steel	1969	2'-6"	Tata Iron & Steel Co.
36.	Animated Suspension	Aluminium and Magnet	1970	1'-8"	Artist
37.	Breakthrough	Welded Steel	1969	1'-8"	Artist

## A. M. DAVIERWALLA

Born 20th February 1922 in Bombay.

- 1945-59 Qualified as a pharmaceutical chemist and worked in a pharmaceutical factory. Self taught as a sculptor, mastered wood, stone and marble carving, casting in lead and bronze, welding and working in plastics.
- 1950 Started exhibiting with Bombay Art Society. Also exhibited with the Indian Sculptors' Association, Bombay State Art Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi and other exhibitions in various other important cities of India
- 1963 Represented Indian Sculptors in Commonwealth Art Today (London and Edinborough).
- 1963 Exhibited at the Sao Paulo Biennale
- 1966 Venice Biennale
- 1969 Exhibited in the travelling Exhibition of the Institute of International Education in the U.S.A.
- 1970 Participated in a group show, Coray Gallery, Zurich
- 1970 Ashoka Gallery, New Delhi.

1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1965. One-Man Exhibitions in Bombay.

Won several awards, notable amongst them, the bronze medal of the Bombay Art Society 1950 and silver medal in 1955. First prize of the Bombay State Art Exhibition concurrently in 1957-1958. Gold medal of All India Sculptors' Association in 1957. Prize for sculpture, annual exhibition of the Lalit Kala Akademi 1965.

- 1952 Brief visit to Europe, travel through Naples, Rome, Florence, Zurich, Paris and London.
- 1959 Abandoned profession of chemist and took up sculpture. Executed commissions for Atomic Energy Establishment, Larsen and Toubro, Life Insurance Corporation Bhagvati Hospital, Ananta Co-operative Housing Society.
- 1968 Spent one year in the U.S.A. on ■ John D. Rockefeller 3rd., Fellowship.

Represented by Bertha Schaefer Gallery in New York.





*already published*

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